

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A process for producing a self-regulating sterilization system adapted for subsequent maintenance-free sterilization, characterized in that said process comprising the steps of:

(a) oxidizing a noble metal surface of a base material comprising noble metal ~~is first oxidized~~ in an acidic solution and then ~~treated~~

(b) treating the product of step (a) with an aqueous salt solution, whereby slightly soluble noble metal salts or a mixture of noble metal salts of different solubility products are formed on the noble metal surface, which salts have grown directly on the base material;

(c) wherein steps (a) and (b) are performed prior to contact of the sterilization system with an item to be sterilized.

2. (Original) The process as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the noble metal is copper, silver or gold.

3. (Previously presented) The process as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the base material is a solid body made of noble metal or an alloy comprising noble metal, a noble metal wire, noble metal wool, knitted noble metal fabric or woven noble metal fabric, a

support coated with noble metal or a mixed woven fabric or mixed knitted fabric made of noble metal, or a noble metal powder, a shaped body comprising noble metal powder, or a coating comprising noble metal powder.

4. (Previously presented) The process as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the acidic solution has a pH less than 1 and/or comprises water and/or the acidic solution comprises oxidizing inorganic or organic acids and/or mixtures of non-oxidizing acids with water-soluble oxidizing agents.

5. (Previously presented) The process as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the acidic solution comprises acids which contain nitrogen in oxidation state +5, sulfur in oxidation state +VI, the halides chlorine, bromine and iodine in oxidation state +5 or +7, boron in oxidation state +3, manganese in oxidation state +7 and/or oxygen in oxidation state -1 or -2.

6. (Previously presented) The process as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the salt solution comprises hydroxide, carbonate, chloride, bromide, permanganate, chlorate, perchlorate, percarbonate, persulfate, iodate, periodate, perborate, oxalate, bromate and/or perbromate ions and/or anions of pharmacologically active noble metal compounds.

7. (Previously presented) The process as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the

aqueous salt solution is weakly acidic ($\text{pH} > 4$) to alkaline (pH approximately 11), and/or the aqueous salt solution and/or the acidic solution is 0.1% by weight to saturated or concentrated, respectively, and/or the aqueous solution is free from ammonium compounds or sulfide ions.

8. (Previously presented) The process as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the base material, after the oxidation and before the treatment with the salt solution, is quenched with water.

9. (Previously presented) The process as claimed in one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the oxidation of the noble metal surface in the acidic solution and/or the quenching with water and/or the treatment with the salt solution is performed in a temperature range between 10°C and 130°C .

Claims 10-16 (Canceled).

17. (Previously presented) The process as claimed in claim 3, characterized in that the fabric is made of noble metal together with synthetic and/or carbon fibers.

18. (Previously presented) The process as claimed in claim 7, characterized in that the aqueous salt solution is neutral or alkaline.

19. (Previously presented) The process as claimed in claim 9, characterized in that the treatment with the salt solution is performed in a temperature range below 80°C.